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Publications

# Report to School Councils on Education





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## Message from the Minister of Education



I am pleased to introduce the first Annual Report to School Councils.

This report is the result of the government's commitment to report annually to members of school councils on the state of education in the province.

Our government's education reforms are aimed at improving student learning and achievement. We want to equip our young people with the skills they will need for success in a fast-paced and competitive world. We continue to concentrate on higher standards, strategies to help our students meet those standards and greater accountability in the education system.

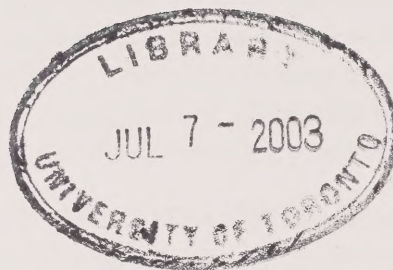
In the past year, we have moved forward with important improvements, including:

- increased accountability to parents and an expanded role for school councils;
- initiatives to encourage safer and more respectful schools;
- continued implementation of the new high school curriculum;
- additional measures to support excellence in learning and teaching;
- increased resources for Special Education and the new Early Reading Strategy; and
- planning for the "double cohort".

My sincere thanks to school councils throughout the province for their dedication and enthusiasm.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Janet Ecker".

Janet Ecker  
Minister



# School councils take on new roles

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For parents to make informed decisions about their children's education, they need to know what's happening in their children's schools. They also need ways to make their voices heard and to influence school policies and plans.

School councils meet these needs. They provide a forum through which parents can contribute to improving student achievement and school performance. In addition, school councils have the opportunity to involve the community in the discussion of education issues, and to help the school identify and respond to the educational needs of the community.

## Parental involvement is key

Recent changes to provincial education regulations have expanded the role that school councils play in advising both school boards and principals.

The new regulations require school boards and principals to consult with school councils on issues that affect student learning. School councils may now provide advice on both developing and implementing policies and plans for many important matters, including:

- criteria for selecting principals and vice-principals;
- the local Code of Conduct; and
- appropriate dress codes for students.

In addition, the new regulations require school boards and principals to consider the recommendations of school councils, and report back on how they plan to act on their advice.

## New resources available

Parents and members of school councils have access to a growing variety of resources, including:

### School Councils: A Guide for Members 2001

- Provides a comprehensive guide to the roles and responsibilities of school councils and their relationships with key education partners;
  - Includes practical advice on school council effectiveness, orientation and training of members, priority setting, decision-making, communications and accountability.
- [mettowa21.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/councils.pdf](http://mettowa21.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/councils.pdf)*



### **Ontario Parent Council Website**

- A website by parents and for parents of elementary and secondary students in Ontario.
- Check it out for information on the mandate, responsibilities and membership of the council, the council's views on education issues, and school councils.

*[www.ontarioparentcouncil.org](http://www.ontarioparentcouncil.org)*

### **School Board Profiles**

- A Ministry of Education database that provides contact information on every school board in the province.
- Each board profile includes information on enrolment and staffing, average class size, student/computer ratio, use of school space, student performance on Grades 3 and 6 province-wide tests and classroom spending.

*[esip.edu.gov.on.ca](http://esip.edu.gov.on.ca)*

### **School Facilities Inventory System**

- An information system that collects school capacity and utilization data for Ministry decisions on a variety of grants to school boards.
- Includes the results of the Annual School Facility Survey, which contains evaluations of schools by principals, school councils, teachers, non-teaching staff and students.

*[sfis.edu.gov.on.ca](http://sfis.edu.gov.on.ca)*

## **New roles, broader opportunities**

School councils now have new tools to play a wider and more effective role in the school and the community. There are new ways for school councils to be involved in creating a learning environment that contributes to improved student achievement and performance.

Adjusting to these new opportunities will require councils to expand their horizons, develop new skill sets and involve diverse members of the community in their work. Developing and sustaining positive working relationships among key partners – school councils, principals and boards – will be more important for school councils than ever before.

The new publication, *School Councils: A Guide for Members 2001*, contains valuable advice on how school councils can:

- hold effective school council elections;
- interact with principals and boards;
- set objectives and priorities;
- develop community partnerships;
- establish and maintain channels of communication; and
- build accountability.

The Ministry is committed to making periodic updates to the guide to ensure it remains a relevant and useful resource for school council members.

These and other resources are helping to ensure that school councils function effectively and that parents have greater influence on decisions affecting their child's learning.

### **Ontario Parent Council gains new members**

The Ontario Parent Council has two purposes:

- to advise the Minister of Education on issues that concern the parents of elementary and secondary school students in Ontario; and
- to increase parents' participation in the education of their children.

In April 2001, the province moved to provide school councils with a provincial voice through representation on the Ontario Parent Council. Six regional representatives from school councils across the province now sit on the Council. The new representatives were selected from a roster of individuals nominated at six regional school council forums held across the province earlier this year.

Members of the new 20-member Council now include:

- a representative from each of the three provincial parents' organizations – the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, the Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education and Parents partenaires en éducation;
- 11 additional parents from at large; and
- the six regional representatives of school councils.

*Study after study has shown that parents who take an interest and an active role in the education of their children can help them perform better.*

– Greg Reid, Chair,  
Ontario Parent Council



# Safe and secure schools

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All students, parents, teachers and staff have the right to be safe, and feel safe, in their school communities.

The provincial Code of Conduct helps to restore respect and responsibility in our classrooms. The *Safe Schools Act, 2000* sets out mandatory consequences for certain infractions and was fully in force as of September 1, 2001. During the past year, the government has moved forward with several steps to implement the Code.

## **Suspensions and expulsions**

Since the start of the current school year, new rules have been in effect to cover suspensions and expulsions.

Principals now have the authority to expel students from their school for up to one year for serious infractions. And teachers are able to issue one-day suspensions for a number of provincially set infractions.

As part of the new rules, flexibility exists to ensure that fairness and common sense are used in applying consequences. For example, expulsion is not mandatory if a pupil does not have the ability to control his or her behaviour or cannot understand the foreseeable consequences of his or her behaviour.

## **Strict discipline programs**

Students who have been fully expelled need to understand that there are consequences for their actions, and they need to address the behaviour that led to their expulsion.

As of September 2001, fully expelled students must complete a strict discipline or equivalent program before they will be allowed back into the publicly funded school system.

Fifteen innovative demonstration projects for expelled students are now under way across the province. The projects are focused on assisting students to develop the skills they need to turn their lives around. The Ministry will assess these projects over the next two years and draw on best practices for future implementation.



## **Actions and consequences**

Under the *Safe Schools Act, 2000*, students will be immediately suspended and proceed to an expulsion inquiry or hearing for the following infractions:

- possessing a weapon, including possessing a firearm;
- using a weapon to cause or to threaten bodily harm to another person;
- committing physical assault on another person that causes bodily harm requiring medical treatment;
- committing sexual assault;
- trafficking in weapons or illegal drugs;
- committing robbery;
- giving alcohol to a minor; and
- engaging in another activity that, under a policy of the board, requires expulsion.

All expulsion decisions can be appealed. Students expelled by a principal may appeal to the school board. Appeals of all school board expulsions go to the Child and Family Services Review Board.

## **Dress codes/school uniforms**

Many parents believe that a dress code or school uniform is a good way to encourage respect, responsibility and safety in schools. Earlier this year, school boards were directed to put in place policies to enable a majority of parents – through their school council – to set a dress policy for their school.

## **Student Protection Act, 2001**

Legislation introduced for consideration by the Legislature in the fall of 2001 proposes important new steps to protect students from sexual abuse or misconduct by teachers.

The Act would provide the Ontario College of Teachers, school boards, principals and teachers with the information and authority they need to act quickly when students have been, or could be, sexually abused or put at risk of harm or injury:

- It would provide an expanded definition of sexual abuse that includes sexual harassment and inappropriate behaviour.
- It would require school boards to remove from the classroom teachers who might pose a threat to students.
- New comprehensive reporting and information-sharing protocols among school boards and the Ontario College of Teachers would be established. This would make it more difficult for teachers who have been disciplined for sexual abuse to quit and move from one board or school to another undetected.

The proposed legislation responds to the recommendations made by retired Justice Sydney L. Robins. He reported last year on the events surrounding the 1996 conviction of a Sault Ste. Marie teacher for sexually assaulting more than a dozen students over a period of 21 years.

### **Safe schools support teaching and learning**

Other features of the safe schools initiative include:

- rules on who is permitted to be on school property;
- criminal background checks for individuals in regular contact with students;
- a provincial protocol for board procedures on how and when to involve police in school incidents; and
- singing “O Canada” every day.



# Preparing for success in the knowledge economy

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Technology and globalization are rapidly changing where we work, how we work and the skills we need to bring to the workplace. As a result, providing students with access to opportunity requires both high achievement and preparation for many different possible futures.

Those are the goals of Ontario's new, rigorous high school program – to prepare students for the competitive workplace and lifelong learning. Phase-in of the new curriculum reached Grade 11 this year and will be completed when the first students take the new Grade 12 curriculum in the 2002-03 school year.

## Higher standards, more choice

In Grades 9 and 10:

- Applied and Academic courses focus on essential knowledge and skills.
- There are rigorous compulsory courses, such as math, English, French, science, geography and history.
- Successfully completing the compulsory Grade 10 Literacy Test has become a high school graduation requirement.

In Grades 11 and 12:

- Students choose courses that support their individual plan to enter the workforce or an apprenticeship program, or to go on to college or university.
- Students study advanced material and concepts, and are challenged to develop skills in critical and analytical thinking.
- Transfer courses are available for changes from one destination-based course to another.

## Learning the value of community

Community involvement has always been part of the Canadian way of life. To help students be more involved in their community and give them additional experience outside the classroom, students must now complete a minimum of 40 hours of community involvement activities to graduate from high school.

### **Linking schools and workplaces**

More than 50 per cent of students entering Grade 9 go directly into the workforce after high school. Ontario's new high school curriculum builds bridges between school and the workplace:

- All high school students must now take part in career education and planning;
- High schools are required to help students make the transition to work, through co-op education programs, work experience, job-shadowing and youth apprenticeship; and
- The new high school program includes "destination-based" courses. They help students develop the knowledge and skills they need to move smoothly to work, apprenticeship, college or university.



# Excellence and achievement in our schools

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Successful students and excellence in education do not happen by accident. They require involved parents, excellent teaching, positive school environments and challenging curricula with high standards. They also require a commitment to accountability and improvement throughout the education system, backed by:

- teacher testing to ensure that all teachers have the up-to-date skills, knowledge and training they need;
- standardized province-wide tests to evaluate how students are learning; and
- school boards and schools prepared to respond to the results of province-wide tests, set goals, make adjustments and target resources to ensure student success.

The past year has seen several important steps towards improved student performance and increased accountability.

## **More choice and accountability**

The 2001 Throne Speech announced a package of initiatives to increase choice and accountability in education. These include plans to:

- remove the institutional bias against home schooling by increasing parents' access to standard tests and other learning tools;
- require that schools promote only those students who achieve at an acceptable level;
- allow parents to enroll their children in any available school within their system.

*When parents are involved in their children's education, the level of student achievement increases. Students attend school more regularly, they complete more homework in a consistent manner, and demonstrate more positive attitudes towards school. They are also more likely to complete high school.*

Education Improvement  
Commission, 1998

## **Province-wide parents' survey**

For the first time, parents have the opportunity to tell the provincial government what works and what needs improvement in Ontario's education system.

The first annual parent survey on education was included in the government's Winter 2001-02 *ON* Magazine delivered to each household. Questions asked in the survey include assessing the quality of education, school safety, setting priorities and responding to parents' needs. A focused telephone survey, to be conducted this winter, will complement this initiative. Results of the surveys will be made public this spring.

Information on the survey is available at [www.edu.gov.on.ca](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca) or by calling 1-800-387-5514.

## Helping teachers stay up-to-date

One of the key foundations of quality education is excellence in teaching. Excellent teachers are vital to helping students succeed and fulfill their academic potential. They foster a passion for learning that students carry with them for life.

Ontario has many excellent teachers. To help improve student learning, it is essential that teachers' training, ongoing learning and evaluation be more rigorous and consistent. Over the past two years, the Ontario government has been putting in place the components of its Ontario Teacher Testing Program.

Teacher testing is a comprehensive program that assesses both knowledge and skills:

- All new applicants to the profession who took their training outside Ontario in a language other than English or French must pass a language proficiency test.
- The *Stability and Excellence in Education Act, 2001*, passed by the Legislature in June 2001, requires teachers to take part in a series of 14 professional learning courses over five-year cycles throughout their careers. Mandatory professional learning will formally recognize the many professional development activities already undertaken by most teachers.
- The *Quality in the Classroom Act, 2001*, which was passed in late 2001, adds two additional components. It establishes a qualifying test for all new teachers in Ontario, as well as a framework for the regular, fair and consistent evaluation of teachers' skills and performance in the classroom. The legislation also gives parents input into the evaluation of their child's teacher.

The successful completion of these new requirements will assure parents that all teachers have the up-to-date skills and knowledge they need to provide excellent instruction to students.

## Student testing

Student testing is a key part of the government's plan to improve student achievement. Testing can tell parents and teachers whether students are learning and making progress. Testing also helps identify areas that need improvement and students who need help.

In 1996-97, along with the new curriculum, Ontario began introducing standardized tests. Existing tests include Grades 3 and 6 reading, writing and math tests, the Grade 9 math test introduced in 2001, and the Grade 10 Literacy Test, which becomes a high school graduation requirement this school year.

In 2001, the government announced plans to expand its testing program to more subjects and grades. The new testing will be phased in over five years starting in 2002-03 with science and technology in Grades 4 and 7 and social studies in Grades 5 and 8.



## Student learning improving

The latest Grade 3 and 6 province-wide test results for math, reading and writing were released in the fall of 2001. The results confirm that more students are achieving the provincial standard – a B grade or better:

- English-language Grade 3 students reaching the provincial standard in math have increased from 43 per cent in 1998 to 61 per cent in 2001.
- English-language Grade 6 students achieving the provincial standard in reading rose from 48 per cent in 1999 to 55 per cent in 2001.
- French-language Grade 3 students meeting the provincial standard in writing increased from 42 per cent in 1998 to 51 per cent in 2001.
- French-language Grade 6 students meeting the provincial standard in math increased from 55 per cent in 1999 to 60 per cent in 2001.

## Ontario Early Reading Strategy

Student tests are important tools for improving the quality of education and Ontario is putting them to work. The Ontario government is committed to working with school boards and educators to continue improving student achievement.

In 2000, the province began investing \$70 million annually for programs to improve the reading and writing skills of students in JK to Grade 3. In 2001, this funding was supplemented with an additional \$24 million to launch the Ontario Early Reading Strategy, which has three main components:

- Every fall, elementary schools will review their students' results in reading as measured by the annual province-wide Grade 3 test, and set three-year targets for improving reading achievement. Schools will also report annually to parents on progress made toward meeting their targets.
- As well, funding has been provided for schools to acquire new, approved reading resources for students in JK to Grade 3. The province is providing resources to support professional development for principals and lead teachers in target setting, assessing reading skills and using the results to provide better instruction to students.
- This year, the province set up school improvement teams at selected schools that need extra help to improve student achievement in reading. In addition, the Ministry released *Helping your child learn to read: A Parent's Guide*.

The guide is available at [reading.edu.gov.on.ca](http://reading.edu.gov.on.ca) (English) or by calling 1-800-387-5514.

## Progress on Special Education

In early 2000, the Ontario government announced a multi-year plan for improvements to Special Education, focusing on greater accountability to parents, province-wide standards and increased funding.

- Standards for school board Special Education Plans have been established.
- Individual Education Plan (IEP) standards are now in place, and this year over 1,200 school board staff and Special Education Advisory Committee members attended nine training sessions on the implementation of IEP standards.
- Working with the Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education and other interested organizations and individuals, the Ministry is now developing program standards for each exceptionality.
- To respond to the need for accessible and accurate information, the Ministry recently published *Special Education: A Guide for Educators*. This guide is available at [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/guide.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/guide.html) or by calling Publications Ontario at 1-800-668-9938.
- Funding for Special Education in Ontario continues to rise. In the current school year, funding will total \$1.37 billion, representing an overall increase of 17 per cent since 1998-99.
- The Ministry is working with school boards and health and social service providers to promote better co-ordination of services for children with special needs, especially for young children entering school from pre-school programs.

The Ministry is committed to further consultations with Special Education partners to ensure that new standards and approaches are understood, supported and achievable.



# Meeting students' needs

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Every day, almost 2 million students attend class in 5,000 schools across Ontario. That's a lot of classrooms in a lot of buildings. So how do our school facilities and school grounds measure up? Are they being maintained in good condition? Are necessary repairs being made on time? Are schools safe and clean?

## Managing school facilities

Parents can now find answers to these questions through the School Facility Survey. Part of the School Facilities Inventory System (SFIS), its purpose is to get an indication of satisfaction with the overall cleanliness, condition, comfort and safety of schools in Ontario.

In the fall of 2000, SFIS conducted its first annual survey of school facilities and had over 19,000 respondents, including principals, school councils, teaching and non-teaching staff and students. The results of the survey are now available at the SFIS website: [sfis.edu.gov.on.ca](http://sfis.edu.gov.on.ca).

Overall ratings of school facilities are consistently positive across all groups responding to the survey, and at both the elementary and secondary levels. Overall, 98 per cent of respondents rated their schools as satisfactory or better. The survey identified 32 schools where all five stakeholder groups responded and ranked their school facilities as excellent. The government will continue to work with school boards to ensure they have the resources to operate and maintain schools effectively and efficiently.

## New funding formula spurs school construction

Under Ontario's student-focused funding approach, funding for new school facilities is guaranteed when student enrolment within a board is greater than the existing capacity of the board's schools.

This new approach to financing school construction also enables boards to finance projects over a longer period of time. This means that each dollar of funding generates more construction starts now.

Funding under the new approach is producing results:

- Since 1998, 246 new schools and additions have been built for more than 106,500 students. Over the same period, the number of portable classrooms across the province has been reduced by 1,250 – a reduction of more than nine per cent.

- In the current school year, a total of \$315 million will be provided for new pupil places, an increase of \$110 million over the previous year.
- This year, the funding formula has been changed to help boards that do not qualify for capital funding but face major enrolment pressures at specific schools. The province has committed an additional \$20 million to help boards in this position.



# Preparing for the “double cohort”

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It's something we've never seen before – two high school graduating classes in the same year. Students who entered Grades 11 and 12 this school year will both graduate in 2003, one group from the new four-year system and the other from the current five-year program.

With so many looking to attend our colleges and universities, students and parents have a lot of questions. Will there be enough spaces and faculty? What will happen to tuition fees? And will there be enough student assistance available to meet the demand?

During the past year, the Ontario government has continued to prepare for the double cohort – through a comprehensive plan to ensure a postsecondary place for every willing and qualified student.

## Building for the future

Through SuperBuild, which consolidates all of Ontario's infrastructure spending under one program, the province and its partners are investing \$1.8 billion in 59 new capital projects on college and university campuses across the province. This will create more than 73,000 new student spaces – the largest single expansion in 30 years.

Since 1999, SuperBuild has also provided \$297.5 million to help colleges and universities renovate and upgrade existing facilities. These funds will create additional room for the remaining expected increase in enrolment by using existing buildings more efficiently.

## Increased operating funds

In the 2001 Budget, the province committed to increasing operating funds for colleges and universities by a projected \$293 million by 2003-04.

### Making informed choices

Choosing the right college or university program is a big decision that requires information. The following information sources can help students and parents make that decision:

### Update: Ontario's Plan for Students in the Double Cohort

- Detailed information on the steps Ontario is taking to ensure there is a post-secondary place for every willing and qualified student.

[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/postsec/superbuild/doublecohort.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/postsec/superbuild/doublecohort.pdf)

### **SuperBuild Projects at Colleges and Universities**

- Lists 59 individual capital projects that will create 73,000 new student spaces at Ontario colleges and universities.

*[www.edu.gov.on.ca/superbuild/english/projects](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/superbuild/english/projects)*

### **Council of Ontario Universities Admission Requirements for the New Ontario Secondary School Curriculum**

- Summarizes the admission requirements for programs offered at each Ontario university.

*[www.ouac.on.ca/news/jan2001.pdf](http://www.ouac.on.ca/news/jan2001.pdf)*

### **Ontario College Application Services**

- A comprehensive guide to Ontario colleges of applied arts and technology admission requirements under both the current five-year and new four-year high school programs.

*[www.ocas.on.ca/applying/admission\\_requirements](http://www.ocas.on.ca/applying/admission_requirements)*

### **Postsecondary Overview**

- Provides detailed information on the performance of Ontario colleges and universities;
- Key performance indicators measure percentages of students who graduate and go on to employment in their area of study, levels of student and employer satisfaction, and graduation rates for colleges and universities.

*[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/postsec/ps\\_overview.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/postsec/ps_overview.html)*

### **myfuture.ca**

- Provides information on program requirements at all universities to help high school students plan for university;
- The site links to all universities in Ontario and to other sites for information on related topics such as financial planning.

*[www.myfuture.ca/flash/english.html](http://www.myfuture.ca/flash/english.html)*

These funds, as well as an additional \$72 million being provided in the current year, will enable the universities and colleges to hire new faculty and staff and acquire the necessary equipment and learning resources to accommodate the double cohort.



## Capping tuition fees

Under changes introduced last year, college and university tuition increases on average are capped for five years at two per cent per year beginning in 1999-2000. This cap will extend over the years when enrolment will be affected by the double cohort.

## More resources for students

The government has taken several recent steps to ensure postsecondary students have access to the financial resources they need to reach their goals:

- Changes announced this year allow students to receive more from bursaries or earnings from part-time work without affecting their level of Ontario student assistance.
- Under the new Ontario Student Opportunity Grant, students are required to pay only the first \$7,000 of their combined annual Canada and Ontario Student Loans upon graduation.
- The new Aiming for the Top scholarships recognize high school students with high marks and financial need. When fully implemented, \$35 million will be invested annually in these tuition scholarships.
- The Ontario Student Opportunities Trust Fund provides funds at colleges and universities to provide aid to students in need.

These steps will help meet the goal of continuing Ontario's prosperity by providing our students with access to the high-quality education they need to seize the opportunities of our changing economy.

## Conclusion

It is important that our young people fulfill their potential. Education is the key to our prosperity as a province. It provides Ontario's young people with the knowledge and skills they need for success in today's competitive world.

Ontario's education reforms are aimed at renewing the focus on students and learning – through a stronger voice for parents in education, safer schools, standards-based curricula, regular student achievement tests and teacher testing.

Ontario's priority continues to be the creation of an education system focused on accountability, excellence in teaching and learning and continuous school improvement.

## For more details

If you would like more information about education reform in Ontario, visit the Ministry's website at [www.edu.gov.on.ca](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca) or call (416) 325-2929 or 1-800-387-5514.









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